

August 21, 1959

TO: The Secretary

THROUGH: S/S
G - Mr. Merchant
FROM: EUN - Foy D. Kohler
SUBJECT: Some Basic Factors in the German Situation

In addition to the various points made in the several papers prepared for the President's talks with Adenauer, you may wish to have the following general considerations in mind in discussing the German situation with the President. There are certain persistent psychological and political factors which color the situation in the Federal Republic and are a necessary part of any realistic approach.

1. We must assume that the Federal Government will be unable to keep any secrets. Sooner or later (usually sooner) everything leaks in Bonn. This is due to a combination of indiscipline and intrigue in the Foreign Office and deliberate policy on the part of the Chancellor's press office headed by von Eckhardt. No matter what the protestations that secrecy must and will be observed, sad experience in Geneva and elsewhere has shown that this is beyond the capacity of the Federal Government. One or more of the numerous correspondents resident in Bonn will always get the story.
2. The German Foreign Office is in a sad state of leaderless disarray, full of faction and intrigue. Various schools of thought propound their own views and attempt to manipulate their acceptance, cutting each other's bureaucratic throats in the process. Foreign Minister von Brentano has lost the respect of his staff and has shown an incapacity for having his views accepted by the Chancellor or doing anything effective in support of them.
3. Since the end of World War II, Chancellor Adenauer has nurtured a deep-seated fear that the United States and the Soviet Union would one day get together and carve up the world, including Germany, to suit their own interests. This is an irrational, almost pathological, factor; acceptance of it as a reality is the only explanation for the intensity of the Chancellor's reactions to such developments as the Radford Plan incident. On the eve of bilateral discussions between the President and Khrushchev, it is likely to be at a point of acute hypersensitivity.
4. The Chancellor obviously fancies himself as a person who knows how to deal realistically with the Soviets. Somewhat patronizingly, he has managed to give the impression during recent months that other Western

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leaders, with some exceptions, are less wise in the ways of the Soviets and, therefore, inclined to be less firm in standing up to them. Despite the possible basis in fact which the conduct of the British may have given the Chancellor for his attitude, there is no reason for Western leaders to have any inferiority feelings vis-a-vis Adenauer on this subject. The Chancellor has been influenced by the historical illusion which has more than once led German leaders to believe that they have some special faculty for understanding Russians and getting the better of them. Although Adenauer would be the last to favor a so-called "Rapallo mentality", his superiority feelings on the subject derive partially from the same basic tradition shared by Rathenau and other German leaders of the "1920's". However, his own record of negotiations with the Soviets in the single example provided by the post-war period is not conspicuous for its success. Many feel that the agreements arising out of the Adenauer visit to Moscow in 1955 represented considerably less than a diplomatic triumph. Some experts believe that the weaknesses evidenced by the representatives of the Federal Republic at that time has been an important factor in subsequent Soviet conduct towards West Germany.

5. A persistent factor in Adenauer's and von Brentano's thinking has been a complete lack of self confidence in the capacity of the West Germans to stand up against any political or psychological blandishments from the East should they be exposed to them. This has resulted in a lack of willingness to consider any institutionalisation of contacts with the East Germans, short of recognition, which, on a theoretical basis, might seem to be of inevitable advantage to the West with its superior political and economic attractions. This lack of self confidence derives principally, it would seem, from recollection of German susceptibility in the past, particularly during the Nazi period, to political aberrations. Cutting across it, of course, are internal political considerations based on the Chancellor's conviction that the SPD (the principal opposition party) has now become thoroughly unreliable in its leadership and cannot be counted on not to sell out to the East.

6. Despite these negative factors and the general lack of confidence in the strength of the Federal Republic evidenced by its own Government, when all is said and done, the situation in the Federal Republic is basically healthy and provides realistic ground for optimism as to both the political and economic future of the country. The Bundestag as a legislative body has grown in collective stature and in the quality of its individual membership during the relatively brief period of its existence. Considering the magnitude of the post-war problems faced by the Federal Government and the need to construct a new bureaucratic tradition out of the ruins of the previous regime, and to recruit personnel under difficult conditions, the inadequacies of the present Federal executive should not be overemphasised.

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All in all the Federal Republic is actually and potentially one of the soundest and strongest members of the European Community, whose continuing support and loyalty is vital to American interests.

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